

The Influence for Good

CECIL O. SAMUELSON

Elder Snow, Elder Johnson, other General Authorities and officers, President Worthen, members of the President’s Council, other administrative leaders, faculty, students, friends, families, and guests, just one year ago, as I stood at this podium nearing the conclusion of my assignment here at BYU, I was quite confident that it was the last time I would have the privilege of greeting and addressing a commencement gathering of this great and unique university. Obviously I was wrong about that, as I have been about some other things over the years. But I am glad that I came.

I am particularly grateful to Professor Robert George for his wonderful and insightful comments. He has been a mentor to many and a great friend and supporter of Brigham Young University and has been helpful to our church. We are honored that he is now part of our group.

What I was not wrong about was my appreciation, affection, and admiration for Brigham Young University. In fact, those sentiments have only increased in the year that we have been away. Today my gratitude is full for the thoughtful friends and associates who have

made possible this honor that if not deserved is nevertheless received with a happy heart and thankful thoughts for all that BYU has come to mean to Sharon and to me.

While our interest in and fondness for you and for the people and the institution that constitute Brigham Young University have not lessened one whit, we no longer worry about the details or specific challenges you face because we have full confidence in the current leadership of President Worthen and his team and all of you as you lead BYU to even greater heights and accomplishments. We learned while being privileged to be directly associated with you that this very special place is not solely dependent—nor will it ever be—on specific individuals. On the other hand, it is also true that everyone so blessed to be a part of BYU in any way has the opportunity to contribute to and advance the sacred mission of this most remarkable and important “house of learning.”

Cecil O. Samuelson, former president of Brigham Young University, received an honorary doctorate when this commencement address was given on 23 April 2015.

One of the blessings of being somewhat removed this past year is that we have been more able to reflect on the big picture of what this university is and where it is going without being preoccupied with necessary but largely temporary details that may deflect from consideration of those things most important, like those that Professor George mentioned. Just one example might be helpful in understanding how we feel.

In our current assignment at the Salt Lake Temple we see and meet a very large number of people on an almost daily basis. You might imagine the intense pleasure we feel when we see and are greeted by students, former students, and other BYU associates in that setting. We occasionally chuckle when long-term workers at the temple seem surprised that we, as relative newcomers, are recognized by so many who come to the temple. For that alone we owe much to BYU.

In retrospect, our time, like yours, passed quickly while being fully immersed in what transpires in this very special place. What does not pass quickly, and perhaps is even permanently enduring, is the influence for good that emanates from BYU. This imprint is both individual in the lives of those blessed to be here and collective in the impact for good

in our various societies and social systems. As I read regularly of the important research results coming from our scholars, I am happily impressed with the significant contributions being made to the global good.

These gifts cover a broad spectrum of the arts and sciences and are not unlike those coming from other great universities. But, and this is particularly important, there are unique contributions made by and at BYU that give reason for the faith that is within us of the reality of our living Father in Heaven; His Beloved Son, the Savior and Redeemer Jesus Christ; and the holy plan for each of us. In this regard, defense of the family and religious liberty generally receives and deserves to receive the best efforts of this heaven-supported university that we all love and cherish.

As I conclude my expression of gratitude for all that BYU has done and does, I invite all of you to join me in pledging to continue in our own lives the tremendous work and endeavor that justifies the enormous expenditures and sacrifices that allow for the happy circumstances we enjoy in what we collectively can describe as our BYU experience. May God bless us that this will be so, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.